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ordinary cultivators have to employ casual labour. The rates of daily wages have now increased considerably. In 1939 a male labourer was paid 3 to 6 annas a day, while a woman was paid 2 to 4 annas. In 1951, men were paid between 1 rupee and 1 rupee 8 annas per day, while the women got 8 to 12 annas per day. Rich landowners employ labourers on the basis of an annual contract also. Rates of payment vary with the age, ability and experience of the person employed; and also partly with the financial position of the employer. According to our statistics wages differ from Rs. 280 to Rs. 120 per year, and may be paid in cash or kind. Depending on the agreement the employee may be paid a cash monthly salary, or he may be paid a part in cash and a part in grain. Very often the agreement includes the following in the wages for the year: an agreed sum at the end of the year, one or two meals a day or a specified quantity of grain every week, and a set or two of new clothes and footwear or a blanket. As a rule advances are drawn from time to time, and when they exceed the stipulated sum the labourer has to agree to work the following year also to repay the debt.

3. THE AGRICULTURAL YEAR

The agriculturists in Shamirpet follow the local almanac. Most of their moves in farm activity depend upon the position of the stars in the sky. According to this almanac a month is divided into two *katis*, each with a duration of approximately fifteen days. Each of these divisions bears a name which indicates a particular position of the stars. According to the traditional agricultural lore of the people the different *katis* are suitable for different kinds of agricultural activities and provide the agriculturist with a schedule for the different stages of his work in the field. Of course, he also takes into consideration other natural factors, such as the possibility of rainfall in the immediate future; but in general his moves follow the time-tested schedule of the Hindu calendar. Muslim agriculturists too follow this calendar and share with their Hindu neighbours their agricultural folklore.

In late summer (i.e. the end of May) the agriculturists keep their fields clear for ploughing in anticipation of a light shower of rain. Invariably there is some rainfall during this period which softens the ground and makes it possible for them to start ploughing. With the advent of this eagerly awaited drizzle the farmers

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796 folk-plays concerning Jamavanta, their legendary hero and founder of the caste.

I do not propose to give minute ethnographic details regarding the festivals enumerated above. The brief accounts that follow are intended to illustrate the nature of the festivals and their place in the annual round of activities in the community. The mythological background of these festivals has been recorded from oral [805] tradition and not from Hindu scriptures. Hindu months, according to the Western calendar, would be:

Hindu Month	*Corresponding English Months*	*Hindu Month*	*Corresponding English Months*
Chaitra	March–April	Ashvina	September–October
Vaishakha	April–May	Kartika	October–November
Jyeshta	May–June	Margashirsha	November–December
Ashadha	June–July	Pushya (Pousha)	December–January
Shravana	July–August	Magha	January–February
Bhadrapada	August–September	Phalguna	February–March

The festivals are described in their chronological order:

Ugadi. Ugadi, the Telugu New Year's Day, is an important festival. It is observed on the first day of the Hindu month of Chaitra. Although it is observed by all the Hindu castes generally, its significance for the Brahmins, Komtis, Reddis and the Panch Bramha group is greater.

The day previous to Ugadi the Panch Bramha groups worship their implements and renew their sacred threads, which they alone wear, apart from Brahmins and Komtis.

On the Ugadi day itself people get up early in the morning. Women sweep the courtyard, sprinkle cow-dung mixed in water, and then draw decorative designs with flour or coloured powders. Men go out to collect mango leaves and *neem* (margosa tree, *Azadirachta indica*) twigs; make festoons (*toran*) by stitching these together in a long string, and decorate the front portions of their houses with them. The potters supply each household with two earthen pots: one large, another small enough to act as a lid for the larger. Each family expects these pots from the potter attached to it. All members of the family, except the sick, take their bath on this day, and gather together inside the house. In the room where the gods of the household are lodged the earthen pots are placed [272] in a central position. The large pot is filled with a sweet drink made by mixing jaggery, tamarind pulp, slices of raw mangoes, grated coconut and other spices. It is topped by the smaller pot.